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Republicans, meanwhile, were partying it up last night with some of the big names in the Senate and administration. About 1,000 members of the Republican Senatorial Inner Circle showed up at a reception in the J. W. Marriott Hotel where Vice President George Bush and his wife Barbara were the star attractions.

Contributing at least \$1,000 a year for use in Senate campaigns, Inner Circlers have been coming to town twice a year since 1979 to brush up on their inside connections. They do that over small, intimate dinners. Last night there were about 50 dinners and among those presiding were White House deputy chief of staff Mike Deaver; White House political director Ed Rollins; Bush's chief of staff Craig Fuller; Agriculture Secretary John Block; Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret Heckler; CIA Director William Casey; White House counsel Fred Fielding; Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole; Sen. Robert Dole; Sen. Richard Lugar, and Sen. John Heinz, who chairs the group.

"It's as informal as possible, like sitting down with a friend," said spokeswoman Christina Kennedy. "They talk about national policy but eventually they talk about their children, their families and things like that."

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